



# Chambers's Journal

## SIXTH SERIES.

### BEHIND THE SCENES.

**C**ONTRARY to the opinion of those who, knowing little of theatrical matters, are prejudiced against them, it is a most difficult matter for an outsider to find his way 'behind the scenes.' The stage-door is most carefully guarded against the entrance of unauthorised visitors, and one must have actual business to transact before the manager will vouchsafe the magic 'open sesame.' For this place of make-believe and illusion is so busy a spot that a loitering idler would be terribly in the way, and would run no little risk of being injured by the carpenters and scene-shifters who hurry about the limited space burdened with all sorts of things incidental to the building up of the scenery.

A toy theatre, such as is sold for the delight of youth, with its cardboard scenes, will give some idea of the general construction of the genuine article, for it has 'wings' at the sides, entrances between those wings, and borders, by which is indicated those slips of canvas painted to imitate sky, trees, rafters, or curtains, as the case may be, which are hung horizontally above the stage. But there all resemblance ceases, a real stage being a far more complicated contrivance than the toy model from which we have drawn a parallel. A modern stage and its appurtenances is indeed a wondrous piece of mechanism, far more full of intricacies for its size than is a watch, and certainly affording a greater variety of mechanical movements.

A large stage may be compared to a house with many floors; and if we were to measure it from its lowest depths to the roof, we should find few many-storied houses to equal it in height. First, there is the stage itself upon which the actors tread the boards. Below this is the mezzanine floor, which is crowded with windlasses and other apparatus for working the traps, and is intersected by movable 'bridges' for the ascent and descent of large pieces of scenery. Beneath, deep down in the ground, is the cellar. This

underground world is often deeper than the stage itself is high, for it must have depth enough to engulf in its embrace an entire scene. Above the stage we find other floors: first, a couple of galleries, one on either side, technically known as 'the flies;' and, high above all, just below the roof of the building, is 'the gridiron,' from which pulleys for working the scenery and other apparatus depend. Those who regard the rigging of a ship as being intricate would be puzzled to find a term to apply to the mass of ropes which form a close network in the upper regions of a theatrical stage. The expression 'knowing the ropes' must have originated in a theatre rather than on ship-board; and to know them thoroughly needs familiarity from childhood. The work involved in rolling up the scenes or cloths is all done from the side galleries or flies; here, too, the 'borders' are changed when necessary, and the drop-scene or curtain hauled up and down by means of a windlass. It is also from this point of vantage that the beneficent beams of the limelight—now being superseded rapidly by electricity—are made to shine on the good fairies and other denizens of stage-land.

Just clear of the stage itself is the green-room, which may be regarded as the drawing-room of the establishment; rooms for the chorus, ballet, and the band; various dressing-rooms, upstairs and downstairs; the wardrobe room or rooms; and various other departments to which no particular attention need be directed. But there are one or two sections of a theatre which are worthy of more detailed notice. The scene-painting room is to an outsider full of interest; and few realise the amount of art-education necessary to those who have to design and carry out these huge pictures. Some ignorantly suppose that scene-painting is a synonym for daubing pigment on to canvas anyhow, and that such work is of the very roughest description. We need hardly say that this is by no means the case; in fact, the colours have to be put on in their right places as carefully as in the most highly finished miniature

painting. It requires, indeed, much art feeling and training to judge of the ultimate effect of handling a brush upon such a scale and upon such a large area as is represented by one of these sheets of canvas. It may be remembered that some of our leading landscape painters—notably Clarkson Stanfield and David Roberts—graduated in the painting-rooms of London theatres.

In painting a canvas, or cloth, as it is called, the material is strained on a frame, and is 'primed' with a coating of glue and whiting. The frame is moved vertically up and down, as occasion may require, through a slit in the floor. In some painting-rooms, however, the frame remains motionless, while the painter and his assistants are moved up and down in front of it on a bridge, like that often used in painting the fronts of houses. The scene is first of all designed on cardboard, ruled across in squares; and the canvas being similarly squared, the design can be sketched in proportionately. The colours are ground in water, tempered with size, and lightened in tone by the addition of the same kind of whiting as that used for cleaning household plate, &c.

Another department of this world of illusion is the property-room, so called because there the various 'properties' or 'props' are constructed and stored for use. Props comprise all the portable articles required in a play. Guns and pistols—which too often fail to go off at the critical moment—are props; loaves of bread, fowls, fruit, all made of a rough *papier-mache*, are also props. We may also include those wondrous gilt goblets, only seen on the stage, which make such a non-metallic thud when they fall and bounce upon the boards, as among the achievements of the property-man. But it is at pantomime-time that that individual is at his busiest. Big masks and make-believe sausages and vegetables, without which no pantomime would be complete, are mingled with fairy wands, garlands of artificial flowers, basket-work frames for the accommodation of giants, and other articles too numerous to mention. How the right things are forthcoming at the right moment is one of those mysteries only known to property-men. Had one of these useful members of the theatrical world the ability and inclination to write a book, what an entertaining volume could he turn out!

A London or first-class provincial theatre would not perhaps furnish examples of those stage *contraptions* which are often more amusing to the onlookers than the play itself; but in minor country theatres the most absurd and incongruous make-shifts are often introduced on the score of a very necessary economy. For example, at one country theatre, we remember a 'prop' which figured in Act I. as a sofa. It was a flat piece of scenery about six feet in length, with scroll edges which represented feet. In Act II. this same prop was turned round, and hung upside-

down by a cord round the hero's neck. It was painted on the side now presented to the audience like a boat; and as the actor grasped the heroine with one arm, he worked the boat up and down with the other while he proceeded across the stage behind a line of canvas representing a stormy sea. On this touching picture the curtain came down amid uproarious applause. Another occasion we call to mind, upon which a flat piece of scenery was used to represent a very solid object, when the resulting applause was of a more derisive nature. In this piece, a very full-flavoured melodrama, the heroine was in peril of her life by being placed by the villain across a railway track. On came an impossible locomotive, piloted at the back by a scene-shifter invisible to the audience, until by some mishap the engine fell flat on its face like a pancake, amid a roar of laughter from a delighted public. Such accidents as these never occur in a well-equipped theatre. Indeed, the complaint is sometimes made that the scenic illusion is so complete and beautiful that the attention of the audience is unduly distracted from the action of the play.

A curious part of stage illusion is that which may be comprehended under the term theatrical meteorology. Whatever may be the state of the weather outside, the stage-manager within can bring about rain and hail, wind, or a thunderstorm at will; and the illusion is so complete as to sometimes make nervous members of the audience insensibly shudder. Hail and rain are represented by a closed wooden cylinder about six feet long, which is obstructed inside by various cross-pieces, a quart of peas completing the arrangement. By turning this cylinder first one way up and then the other, the peas rattle through it with close imitation to the sound of heavy rain on a roof. The wind arrangement consists of a wheel of about two feet diameter, set in a frame like that of a grindstone. This wheel is furnished with ribs on its periphery somewhat like the floats of a waterwheel, and drawn tightly over these ribs is a piece of thick silk. When the wheel is turned the ribs rub against the silk, and by turning the handle first quickly and then slowly, a very good imitation of the sighing of the wind is produced. Lightning can easily be imitated by chemical or electrical means, and the usual mode of producing thunder is by shaking a large sheet of flexible iron plate. Some theatres, have, however, a far more elaborate and effective thunder arrangement, which is used as an auxiliary to the sheet of iron when a storm is supposed to reach its height. This consists of a number of cannon-balls held in a trough and allowed to fall at the right moment, and to run over a floor above the ceiling of the theatre. A snowstorm is brought about by a perforated revolving cylinder above the stage, charged with paper cuttings. Unfortunately these messengers of frost have a habit of resting on all

kinds of projections, and dislodging themselves in subsequent scenes when their presence is not desirable.

Such is a general description of a British theatre so far as its stage arrangements are concerned; and it is noteworthy that, except in minor details, the mechanism employed has not changed for the past two hundred years. This is not because the mechanical arrangements are the best which could be devised, but rather because managers have been content to let matters remain as they are, feeling that, so long as their patrons are satisfied, it would be idle to spend money upon improvements which, although advisable, are not indispensable. Besides, managers are not generally owners of theatres, but rent them for a season only, or perhaps for a term of years. It would under such circumstances be unfair to expect them to make improvements which would be costly and which they could make no claim for on expiration of their tenancy. Then, again, the traditions with regard to stage construction in this country have been handed down through many generations of stage-carpenters, who recognise a certain method of doing a certain thing, and would look askance at any novelty as not to be countenanced.

It is not so on the Continent, where stage construction has of late years experienced a complete revolution. In most of these establishments the manager is represented by a government department with public funds at its disposal. Hence we find that abroad thousands of pounds have been expended in stage mechanism, while we at home have been content with the old methods. Costly experiments have been made, with the result that radical changes have been wrought in the working of stage machinery. Wood has largely given place to iron, hempen ropes to steel wires, while manual labour is largely superseded by hydraulic engines and electric motors. The main idea in making these improvements is to save labour, by bringing under one central control every piece of mechanism connected with the stage; so that, instead of an army of men turning

windlasses or hauling ropes at different points, one man by the touch of a button or a lever can bring about startling changes of scenery, and can even make parts of the stage assume new levels at will.

A notable feature of Continental stage mechanism is the use of hydraulic rams beneath different sections of the stage, by which parts of the floor can be raised, sunk, or inclined at any angle required. This method entirely does away with the clumsy old plan of building up set scenes by the aid of rostrums or raised temporary platforms. An hydraulic addition to the resources of the historic theatre at Drury Lane, London, of the nature just described, has recently been made. By its agency, in a recent representation of a scene in the Highlands, the characters walked up hill and down dale in the most natural manner. By the same means a river lock was represented, with a number of small boats and other craft gradually rising up as the water was supposed to be let into the enclosure. It should be mentioned that the necessary hydraulic machinery for this innovation was procured from Austria, as it could not be obtained here.

And this brings us to another point. The British stage-carpenter is what may be called a 'groovy' man; he has not been educated up to these new ways, and could not readily be made to believe in them. In Continental theatres, on the other hand, the stage-carpenter, as we know him here, has been extinguished by the stage-engineer, a man capable of designing machinery of an intricate character, and holding the same social position as an engineer or architect would with us. It is a new branch of the engineering profession, for which there was a want, and the supply was forthcoming. It will possibly be a long time before similar changes come about in this country. State-aided theatres over here have only reached the step of being talked about; should they ever become a reality, we may look for many improvements in mechanism 'behind the scenes.'

## THE GOLDEN LILY.

### CHAPTER V.—'REVEL'S FIND.'



MR DAVID WARNER and his daughter occupied apartments in Davies Street, Berkeley Square, for the present; and Mr Mark Revel had chambers close by in Mount Street.

They were thus in near communication with each other, and dined together every evening at the rooms in Davies Street.

As Mr Gaverick had learned, the shares of 'Revel's Find' had not been going off very well;

but they were nearly all underwritten, so that the worthy promoters were not as yet particularly concerned about them. It was decided between them, however, that the business required a fillip, for the public had lately been badly bitten in one or two West Australian mines, and a feeling of confidence must be engendered.

Consequently, in the course of a few days the following report appeared in the financial newspapers in the City:

**REVEL'S FIND.**—Manager cables under date 10th instant: 'Have sunk shaft 200 feet on diagonal from north-east corner. At 45 feet have struck very rich lode running south-west. Convinced this is Whitehill lode. Have sent a ton of stone to be crushed at nearest battery.'

This had the desired effect, and a rush for shares set in before they could go to a premium, as they seemed very likely to do. The result of the crushing was anxiously awaited, and in a week it was known. The ton of ore yielded twenty-one ounces of gold. There were no longer shares to be had without paying a premium for them, and Warner and Revel were in high spirits.

'They'll go up and up, Revel,' said Warner that evening as they sat together smoking after dinner. Lily Warner was in the next room passing her time at a piano.

'It would be capital to realise at five pounds,' said the other. 'They will reach that price; the Whitehill lode undoubtedly runs through the property, and Whitehills are now seven and a half.'

'I think we had better have the rest of the purchase-money in shares. We should have thirty thousand each, and they will be worth a good deal more than cash.'

'I agree with you. But we must scatter them about amongst nominees before we begin to realise. The market is deucedly suspicious of vendors.'

'With good reason, Mark,' said the other, with a grin. 'A vendor is supposed to have faith enough in the property to hold on to his shares.'

'Oh, I have faith enough in it—I believe the gold is there. But I prefer cash in hand to dividends, no matter how big these may be. They are always tedious in coming, you know—and one never knows what may happen.'

'That's it, Mark—one never knows. For my part, I intend to unload a lot at three pounds, when they touch that price.'

'About half, say,' observed the other, thoughtfully. 'Yes; I have no doubt it's the best plan, Warner. Let us have another bottle of fizz upon it.'

The bottle of champagne was opened, and they sipped it in silence for some minutes. A glow of satisfaction shone in the face of each as they puffed the fragrant cigars and drank the excellent wine. All was going well with them, indeed. They had not yet received more than the ten thousand pounds already mentioned; but the money was safe in the hands of the company's bankers, and the drawing of it in due course was only a matter of form.

Lily Warner was touching the piano softly in the next room, and sometimes breaking into a low note of song. She sang only a few words at a time, sweetly enough to indicate the fine quality of her voice. Revel had for some time been listening attentively.

'I think, Warner,' he observed at length, 'I

will get a good house somewhere out in Surrey. That part is convenient for reaching the City; and I think Lily would like it better than London.'

Warner said nothing.

'Just a moderate-sized house, you know, with a few acres of land, and stabling. I must consult Lily in the matter.'

Again Warner said nothing, but continued smoking in silence. Revel glanced at him with some surprise.

'What do you think of it, Warner?'

'Oh, the idea is a very good one, no doubt,' answered Warner, rousing himself. 'But, by the way, have you ever popped the question to Lily yet?'

'No,' said Revel, darkening. 'I have not thought it necessary. I thought the matter was quite understood between you and me.'

'You see,' observed Warner, 'the girl may have a will of her own in that business. Girls sometimes have. Mind, I don't say it's the case with Lily, or that she would oppose any arrangement I made for her. I don't think she would, in fact. But I thought it right to mention the matter. As a formality, at least, you must ask her consent.'

As they were speaking the tinkling of the piano had, unnoticed by them, ceased in the adjoining room. Lily Warner was, in fact, entering the dining-room when the subject of their conversation caught her ear, and she came to a dead stop, standing white and still as a statue in the doorway.

'Oh, if that's all, it's nothing,' said Revel, in reply to Warner. 'You have only to tell her the arrangement, and of course she will fall in with it.'

'The arrangement was, that we were to go halves in the proceeds of the sale. We are doing that. I am not so clear, Mark, as to what you understand in regard to Lily.'

'You promised I should have her, didn't you?'

'Did I promise, after sharing halves with you, to throw the girl in?'

'I certainly so understood. There were no conditions mentioned.'

Revel was getting angry, but by an effort kept himself under control.

'Business is business, Mark. In business there are no such things known as free gifts. To be quite plain with you, if Lily is to form part of your share of the enterprise, there must be a consideration.'

'Warner,' answered Revel through his teeth, 'I never thought you would play me false like this!'

'Nonsense, Mark'—

'You are playing me false!' cried Revel. 'You distinctly promised me in Coolgardie that I should have the girl. You reminded me that



you had offered her as a gift to me before—at Adelaide—when I was compelled to decline relieving you of her. You are playing me false if you now go back upon a clear agreement.'

'I am not doing so,' said the other, placidly puffing his cigar. 'There was no clear agreement, as you call it, in regard to the girl. I did promise that you should have her, as you seemed to want her; but I never meant you should have her for nothing. Isn't she worth something more than that, Mark?'

Revel shut his lips tightly, in an effort to control the passion aroused within him. Warner seemed content to wait for his answer. With a deep breath, Revel said at length, slowly:

'How much do you want for her?'

'Well, let us say ten thousand of your shares. That will leave you with twenty thousand still—a pretty good provision, too.'

'I'll give you five thousand.'

'Not enough, Mark.' After a pause Warner added: 'I tell you what, Mark. We won't quarrel over the thing. Let it be eight thousand, and the girl's yours.'

'Needs must,' answered the other bitterly. 'You have me on the hip, and can dictate your terms. Eight thousand let it be. You will see that Lily will be ready to consent?'

'Oh, I'll see to that, Mark. Now, fill your glass, and let us drink to the success of the arrangement.'

It was a pleasant conversation for Lily Warner to listen to. When they began to drink the wine she retreated quietly to the room she had come from, and sat down again at the piano, very pale. Her fingers absently touched the keys from time to time, but she sang no more.

Next morning, as she was seated at breakfast with her father, she noticed that he was much disturbed by a letter he had received, and had pushed away his plate. She was wondering whether it was an angry communication from Mark Revel—for she had noticed how angry he was the night before—when that individual burst into the room, looking very agitated.

'See here!' he exclaimed to Warner, without noticing the girl; 'that infernal cub is in London, after all! Look at this letter.'

'I needn't look at it, Mark. I have a similar one myself.'

Revel dropped on a chair, with his elbows resting on his knees and his head stooped.

'I made sure,' he said—'I made sure he was in South Africa or some such place. What bad luck has brought him home again?'

Lily Warner was listening very attentively. Perhaps she suspected what the matter was.

'That speculation is bootless, Mark. The question is, What's to be done?'

Revel was thinking. Clearly it was a hard problem.

'It will be an awkward business, Warner, if

we are made criminally responsible. Fraudulent trusteeship is an ugly thing. And I know this fellow Braker; he will fasten to us with the tenacity of a bull-dog, and there will be no shaking him off with a compromise.'

'Which means, I suppose,' said Warner, with a sickly look, 'that we shall have to hand out three thousand a piece to that pestilent whelp?'

'More than that, probably. Or else face a judge and jury at the Old Bailey.'

Warner reflected for a few minutes. Both men became conscious, during this pause, of the presence of the girl at the breakfast-table, which, in their preoccupation, they had not noticed or thought of before.

'I tell you what, Mark,' observed Warner. 'Meet me at the office of the company at eleven. We'll talk further then.'

'We can drive in together, can't we?'

'Very well, Mark. I shall be ready in a few minutes.' He glanced at his daughter, who was now sufficiently aware of the nature of their quietude. 'Lily, have you ever known or heard of any one named Hulme?'

'Yes,' she answered quietly, 'in Coolgardie. The young man I nursed in the fever was called Hulme.'

The two men stared at each other.

'Why did you never tell me that?' her father demanded.

'Why should I? I knew nothing about him, except that he was ill. I supposed you knew his name—if you cared to know. There was no mystery about him.'

Nothing more was said to her, and the two men walked down to the square for a cab.

'Well, Mark, we have been unlucky!' said Warner, drawing a deep respiration. 'To think of his being in Coolgardie, and down with typhoid! And here he is now in London, and the devil to pay!'

'The paying will have to be done, too—through the nose,' replied Revel, 'if we are to avoid worse.'

'We must try and get the rest of the cash from the board to-day.'

'What! To clear out, is it?'

'Hanged if I know!' was the uneasy answer.

'Better not attempt that, Warner. I would rather deal with any man in London than that Braker. He is as keen and relentless as a blood-hound. No; we must pay up whatever he will accept, and get out of it. After all, it will be only some three thousand each, and safety will be cheap at the price. I had better see Braker, I think, and have it out.'

The letters they had received were from Mr Braker, acting for Richard Hulme, and simply requesting to be informed of the name of a solicitor who would accept service of a summons requiring them to render an account of their trusteeship to the High Court. The communication was too ominous to be regarded lightly, and the worthies

who received it knew well what it meant. They had absconded from the country with the trust money. Revel was far from sure that Braker would lend himself to the compounding of a felony by assenting to a settlement. But he must see the lawyer all the same.

At the Bank he got out of the cab, to walk down to Mr Braker's office in King William Street. Warner drove on to the company's office in New Broad Street. There was to be a board meeting at twelve, and at that meeting they resolved to have a final settlement of the purchase of the mine. There were ample funds at the bank, and cheques and certificates could be written out in a few minutes. Revel promised to join Warner there after his interview with the solicitor.

Mr Braker was in his office. He was a thin, shaven, ascetic-looking man, with cold steely eyes and a determined mouth—a man one would hardly be encouraged to ask a concession or indulgence from. Such Revel knew him to be, and such he found him to be on the present occasion. Mr Braker was very polite but very decisive.

'I am afraid I cannot oblige you, Mr Revel, by accepting any settlement. My instructions are to bring you and Mr Warner into court.'

'We are ready to pay the money,' argued Revel. 'What more does your client want?'

'I cannot tell. I simply have my instructions.'

Then, fixing his cold eyes on Revel, he added after a moment:

'You are a solicitor, Mr Revel; I need not remind you of the gravity of the case. I need not ask you how you would feel your own responsibility if you were in my position. You are asking me to do a very serious thing by accepting repayment of the trust money. I cannot do it, sir.'

Revel began to feel terribly uneasy. If these proceedings were intended to be retributive, it was a dark prospect for Warner and him. It would mean the Old Bailey and Mr Justice Hawkins—a fearful lookout for wrong-doers.

'Where could I see your client?' he asked at length.

Mr Braker hesitated. But after some thought he gave Revel the address of Mr Gaverick's office.

Thither, with an anxious mind, Revel proceeded. He would offer any penalty to get out of this danger; but he was doubtful, after his interview with the solicitor, whether any offer would be accepted.

He found Hulme with Mr Gaverick. Glancing at the latter, Revel requested a private interview.

'This gentleman is my friend,' said Hulme. 'Anything you have to say to me may be said in his presence.'

'I have called about a letter which I, as well as Mr Warner, have received from your solicitor,

about your mother's trust fund. We are prepared to settle the matter.'

'How?' asked Hulme.

'If you will agree to a compromise,' said Revel cautiously.

'No,' was the decided answer. 'You have rendered yourselves amenable to the criminal law, and you both deserve all it could give you. Either take your chance of a trial, or pay me in full the amount of my mother's fund—six thousand pounds—with the four per cent. interest for the last eighteen months.'

'I am afraid we are not able to do that,' said Revel. 'Anything reasonable we will try to do.'

'Then,' replied Hulme, 'I wish you good-morning. You must go and deal with Mr Braker.'

Revel was sullenly silent. Hulme sat down at the table opposite Mr Gaverick, and proceeded to open some letters. Revel moved slowly towards the door.

'I will go over to New Broad Street and consult Mr Warner. Then I will come back and make you the best offer we can.'

'Mr Mark Revel,' said the young man, 'you will return here before twelve o'clock—it is now within a quarter of eleven—with the full amount I named, in cash, or you will have to arrange with Mr Braker. That is my last word.'

Grinding his teeth, Revel descended to the street. He was not long absent. In three-quarters of an hour he reappeared with a bundle of bank-notes, which he counted down on the table. Hulme gave him a receipt for the money, which he took without a word, and walked out. He heard Mr Gaverick indulge in a hearty laugh as he descended the first steps of the stair. His face was livid with mortification.

Out of the five thousand he had received from the company, Revel had only a few sovereigns left in his pocket now. Warner, he knew, was no better off. But, at all events, they had still twenty thousand in cash to receive, as well as their fully-paid shares, and in an hour's time they meant to have both.

Revel was back in time for the board meeting. There was not much business to transact, beyond signing certificates for shareholders, a small pile of which the secretary had before him on the table. The directors, therefore, earned their fees by a quarter of an hour's conversation on current topics—there were three, besides Warner and Revel—and then the chairman and another signed their names to the certificates and affixed the company's seal to them.

'That's all, I think?' observed the chairman genially when the little business was finished.

'I think, General,' said Warner, 'the time has come for the board to settle with the vendors. The company is in ample funds now, and our scrip for shares may as well be made out at the same time. Both Revel and I are willing to take the

balance in shares. That will leave only twenty thousand to be paid in cash.'

'Of course,' added Revel, 'as to the balance of thirty thousand, although we would prefer to take it in shares, we are entirely in the hands of the board. If you prefer to pay in cash, well and good.'

'That is quite fair, quite right,' said the chairman. 'What shall the balance be, gentlemen—shares or cash?'

'I think,' answered one of his colleagues, 'we ought to defer to the wishes of the vendors. Let it be shares. We shall have the more cash left for working expenses, and these may yet be heavier than we anticipate.'

'Very good,' replied the chairman; 'I shall minute it shares. The secretary will make out the certificates; also the cheques for twenty thousand pounds.'

So the thing was as good as done, and Warner lay back in his chair, with his hands in his trousers-pockets, mentally calculating how much his shares would be worth when the price reached three pounds. Another favourable report respecting the lode would quickly run them up to that price. With the eight thousand shares to be transferred to him by Revel as the purchase-price of his daughter, Warner would be the holder of thirty-eight thousand. Twenty thousand of these sold at three pounds would provide him with a snug capital for a number of 'operations' which he contemplated. The rest would constitute a comfortable reserve. In picturing all this in his mind, he forgot for the time the three thousand he had been obliged to drop that morning to young Hulme.

Not so placid were the reflections of Revel. The loss of that money rankled in his breast. So did the prospective transfer of eight thousand shares to his future father-in-law. If he could have ruined Warner with a stroke of his pen, how willingly he would have done it! But Warner was too clever for him—far too clever. He would have his revenge yet. As soon as he was married to Lily Warner he would devote himself, by every subtle and secret means in his power, to counteracting the schemes of his father-in-law. Warner could not fail to be vulnerable in many points, and Revel meant to keep a sharp lookout for these points, and deal a stab whenever the chance offered.

Let no one suppose he was in love with Lily Warner. He admired the girl as a most desirable chattel. She possessed style and beauty. His theory was that a business man with an attractive wife can turn her to valuable use in a variety of social ways conducive to his own advancement. Mark Revel knew what he was about in marrying Lily; but he had no love for her—he was incapable of such a sentiment.

The secretary filled in the cheques and the certificates, and laid them before the chairman.

The latter was about to sign them, when the office-boy brought in a cable message.

'What is it?' the chairman quickly asked the secretary, as the latter opened it. They were all eager to know, all eager to learn of the further development of the rich lode that promised to make the fortunes of the mine.

The message contained only the single word, 'Hairhung.' It was necessary to get the code-book to translate it. This was soon done, and the secretary was noticed to draw a quick breath.

'What is it, Mr Boke?' demanded the chairman again.

'Only one word, sir—"Hairhung," which means, "The lode has pinched out."'

'Impossible!' cried Warner, leaping to his feet.

The secretary placed the message and the code-book before him, and he verified the translation. There was no error about it. The lode had pinched out. It had been a delusion.

For some minutes there was silence. The chairman was the first to speak. He pushed away from him the cheque-book and the certificates.

'Under the circumstances, I do not think we should be justified in signing these. I am sure the vendors would not expect us to do so.'

'But we do expect you to do so,' said Warner resolutely. 'Why not? We have sold you the property, and you are bound to pay us the agreed price. Is it because of one disappointment we are to be defrauded of our bargain?'

'Defrauded is a word I must request you to withdraw, Mr Warner,' said the chairman severely.

'I beg pardon, General. But, all the same, I insist upon our right to be paid. There is plenty of gold in the mine. Only one shaft has been sunk as yet.'

'I hope you are right, Mr Warner. But I adhere to my opinion that, until it is shown that there is gold, we ought not to part with the purchase-money. We are responsible to the shareholders.'

'I protest, Mr Chairman.'

'Let the board decide,' the chairman observed, turning to his colleagues. These gentlemen were distinctly of the same opinion. The chairman closed the agenda-book and rose.

'That closes the meeting, gentlemen. Let us hope our next one will be held under brighter auspices.'

The other directors also rose, took their hats and coats, and went away.

This was a black day for Warner and Revel. When they were passing through the outer office, a few minutes later, the secretary was at the telephone.

'They had that news in the market,' he said, hanging up the receiver, 'hours before we got it

here. The shares are down to five shillings already.'

They went down the stairs to the street in silence. No two men in London were in what is popularly called 'a tighter place.' They had not ten pounds between them. What on earth were they to do now? There was no doubt in the mind of either that the mine was worthless, and that they would never get another penny of the purchase-money. If that accursed cable message had only been delayed half-an-hour.

The night was wet and cold, and Hulme,

going home late from a lecture at the Polytechnic, got out of the omnibus at Marble Arch to warm his feet with a walk the rest of the way. The rain had left off for an interval, but there was a biting cold wind. Whilst he stood a moment on the pavement to button up his overcoat, a young woman crept from the shadow of the gateway and timidly approached him. He stepped aside to get out of her way, and as he did so he heard his name softly pronounced. Turning quickly round, what was his amazement to see before him in the lamplight, pale and shivering, Lily Warner!

## THE STRAW INDUSTRY.



TO be described as a man of straw is somewhat unflattering, and, in a hard, matter-of-fact world, sufficient even to excite a certain amount of suspicion in the minds of men who, unlike Dick Swiveller, sometimes

allow the wing of friendship to moult a feather.

There is, however, one spot of favoured earth where to be known as a man of straw is indeed a most honourable title, certain to command respect. This is in Luton, a clean, healthy town in South Bedfordshire, containing rather more than 32,000 inhabitants. Here in 'Strawopolis,' and a circle of villages all within fifteen miles of Luton, is the district where the straw hats are made which adorn the heads of our sisters, and which give a sense of airy freedom to the masculine wearer as well.

Although Luton is the *entrepôt*, there are other places in the district which depend solely upon the staple industry of the town for their livelihood. The 'straw circle' embraces Sandy and Pottun, in Bedfordshire, on the north-west, and Dunstable, containing a population of 4513, east of Luton, on the Great Northern Railway. Just inside Hertfordshire is St Albans (with a population of about 13,000), Redbourn, and Harpenden, perhaps less progressive than the other villages. The entire population engaged in the straw trade would not probably exceed 60,000; but the money earned by the straw-workers is well able to support them, with ordinary care, all through the year. This is a saving clause, for many unfortunately lose their heads when the gold comes tumbling in at the end of each season. The result often is that the wiles of the railway companies prove too much for the imprudent and thriftless; and the result of a long holiday at Yarmouth, Brighton, Blackpool, or South Wales is a barren purse during the late autumn months, when work is scarce.

Originally the whole of the plait was grown, designed, and fashioned in the United Kingdom; but of late the foreign importers have beaten their English rivals completely out of the field. The

writer of this article was advised to buy an 'English rustic' for his own use by an expert; but when the establishment recommended was reached, the 'rustic Japanese' was so much more attractive that a hat of that kind was bought in preference. This has been the case in many instances that came to the writer's knowledge, for the Japanese excel both in material and exquisite design. The Chinese are clever, but unreliable on account of the amount of trickery to be contended against in dealing with them. A large trade is also done with France, Switzerland, and some parts of Italy. The most beautiful designs ever seen by the writer were imported from France. There were dozens of them in silk, ready to be copied in making up the plait, and certainly they gave evidence of marvellous inventive powers. There is a small amount of English plait used; but, although sound in quality, the price is too high and the designs wanting in ingenuity and prettiness. One of the most extraordinary things to a novice in connection with the manufacture of straw hats is the fact that straw in some cases is not used at all. The material is wood, so well got up and pliable that it is not discoverable unless pointed out by an expert. Then it can be seen at a glance that the material is merely a painted shaving.

The only other material used is felt, and generally but little of that. Women are mostly employed in the industry, but men do the blocking and felting. There is a considerable amount of dust arising from the work, but it is comparatively innocuous, having nothing deadly in its composition, like the dust breathed by file-makers and others who work where lead, steel, and zinc are in process of manufacture.

There are, however, many peculiarities in the straw trade which deserve mention. What most excited the interest of the writer was the system of the selling of plait—that is, the material in the rough in the first instance—by the manufacturers to the small maker. The manufacturers sell their own imported plait *at a profit* to the small maker, who then works it up into hats ready



for the buyers from London, Paris, or any other great centre. The small maker has in many instances to buy also or invent his own design. When he has completed a number of hats and worked all the plait up, he takes them to the manufacturer, who buys them again in a saleable shape. This is not all. Although the big manufacturer sold the petty maker the plait, he may, upon some pretext or other, refuse to buy the hats when manufactured, thus in some cases bringing ruin upon the maker. Of course in that case the hats may be offered for sale to other manufacturers; but as a rule these have their regular customers (who are also makers), and may refuse to buy unless they were the vendors of the raw plait to the maker in the first instance. This does not happen very often; but the cases in which this is done are sufficiently numerous to cause much anxiety to the petty manufacturer, who does not work in the factories as a mechanic on piece-work.

Luton is honeycombed with 'manufacturers.' Perhaps a man has his wife, two daughters, and a son to assist him. The son does the 'milling,' the strongest girl the 'machining,' the father the 'blocking,' and the mother and the other daughter finish off the hats by sewing in linings, ticketing, and so on. The father would probably have a brass plate upon his door which would have his name and the word 'manufacturer' engraved upon it.

Much of the foreign plait is already bleached and dyed before it is shipped for England; but when this is not the case there are bleachers and dyers already on the spot who carry out the necessary processes; and this branch of the trade is highly lucrative—in fact, the straw trade is a very lucrative industry altogether. The manufacturers of Luton do not, perhaps, acquire the fortunes achieved by the manufacturers of steel, cotton, and cannon. The wealthiest manufacturer in Luton or St Albans would not possess a fortune exceeding £60,000 perhaps, but the trade is universally lucrative. Failures are few, and these are generally brought about by incompetence or extravagance, or both. The average manufacturer makes his five hundred to a thousand a year easily—that is, without strain or any amount of mental worry. There are plenty of men who live by importing and selling plait alone, others bleach and dye, while the manufacturers make their own hats or sell plait to be made up in the way described. The rateable value of Luton, with its population of about 32,000, is over £125,000; and St Albans, with a population of 13,000, is rated at nearly £48,000.

Before the writer proceeded to Luton in a journalistic capacity, he was informed in a London club that the women engaged in the straw trade outnumbered the men by nearly ten to one. As this seems to be a general impression in London and many other places, it may be as well to say

at once that it is entirely erroneous. Upon careful inquiry it would be found that even at the height of the busy season the women never outnumber the men in a greater proportion than three to one. Even then some allowance must be made for hundreds of girls who come to Luton to work in the factory rooms from Dunstable, Harpenden, and other outlying places, returning home to sleep every night. The average proportion employed all the year through would not be greater than two to one.

Some time ago a rumour got about that excited the ire and amazement of the feminine population. The disparity in the sexes in Luton has ever been at once a vexed question and a standing joke. Judge of the mingled laughter and horror which greeted the report that five thousand Japanese girls were coming to this country in order to combat the necessity of importing designed plait over so many thousands of miles of ocean. The idea certainly was plausible if it could have been carried out, and it caught on, some of the manufacturers themselves seriously discussing the project. Rumour reached such a height at last that many believed that not only were Japanese coming, but French, Swiss, and Chinese as well. These foreigners were to design and work up British-grown straw-plait artistically after the fashion of their native countries. Although this was seriously contemplated, the scheme proved unworkable for many reasons. Upon making inquiries the writer elicited that the matter never went beyond a proposal to subscribe £20,000 for purposes of experiment, and that the Japanese Consul-general had never been seriously approached upon the subject. A few enthusiasts predict that the scheme will be revived; but even if it is, in the humble opinion of the writer, it must inevitably fall to the ground.

The inhabitants are exceedingly hospitable, and certainly the girls engaged in the trade are well dressed, pretty, and modest in their behaviour. The town contains plenty of musical talent, and it boasts the possession of the famous Red Cross Silver Prize Band; but otherwise there are hardly attractions enough to keep the young people off the streets. Luton is rigidly Nonconformist in its tendencies, and the Council absolutely decline to license a theatre. There is a 'gaff' which gives entertainments upon approbation, but in no way can it claim the title and dignity of a theatre. Able lecturers attend periodically at the Plait Hall, and provincial theatrical companies appear occasionally at the Town Hall. The manufacturers are chiefly Baptists, Congregationalists, and Wesleyan Methodists, and the ministers use every effort to make their respective churches attractive. The bane of the young connected with the straw trade is the instinct of extravagance. Money in the season is earned easily, and it filters through the purses of the thriftless. Luton, however, is by no means isolated in this respect.

Like nearly everything else connected with the straw industry, the town is very clean. It is also drained upon the best scientific principles, and contains two public parks, a recreation-ground, a hospital, and a public library. The social clubs are much above the average, and strangers who have business in the town are generally loath to leave it. There is a sublime spirit of *camaraderie* among all classes. Poverty

is to be found among those employed in the straw industry as in every trade, but on a smaller scale than in many towns of double the size of Luton. The impression left upon the mind of the visitor is altogether pleasant—an impression which goes to create a lasting belief that the straw industry is one of the most useful, lucrative, and healthy to be found in the United Kingdom.

## LADY STALLAND'S DIAMOND:

### A STORY OF CIRCUMSTANCES.

#### CHAPTER II.



HE library, as the Bishop had expected, was empty. Martin followed him almost at once, closed the door, and stood waiting.

It was then that his lordship saw the full difficulty of his task.

His suspicions, after all, were not certainties, and he was on delicate ground. He decided to speak delicately.

'I wish to say a word about this diamond,' he began, after a long and uncomfortable pause—'the diamond which Lady Stalland has lost.'

Martin inclined his head. In the fading light his face was perfectly inscrutable.

'We may feel sure,' continued the Bishop—'we may feel sure that no one would take the stone deliberately and with full consideration of his action. Temptation is sometimes too strong for the best intentions; it is yielded to in a moment of sudden madness. The action is repented of as soon as it has been committed. Do you understand me?'

'I—I think so, my lord,' answered the footman in a husky voice.

'I trust that no person would be disposed to treat such a fall with too great severity,' the Bishop went on, choosing his words with painful consideration; 'but—but the duty of the culprit is clear. He will at once restore the lost article to its owner in the way which seems best to him, and he will leave the scene of his temptation for ever. You follow me, Martin?'

'Yes—oh yes, my lord,' answered the man again; and his voice was more husky than before.

The Bishop felt greatly relieved. True, the footman had not acknowledged his guilt, but he evidently understood. He would treat him very mercifully.

'That is well,' he said; 'that is well. And I think I may say—I feel sure—that if this is done not a word shall be said. The matter will go no further.'

'It will go no further, my lord,' said Martin.

'You have been so kind in the past that I am sure the matter will go no further.'

The man's voice was broken and unsteady. The library had grown darker during their conversation, and his face was turned aside, but his words were plain enough for any one. The Bishop gave a slight cough, and concluded:

'Then that will do, Martin. I think we quite understand each other. That will do.'

Martin left the room silently. For a while his former master stood alone, thinking of what had passed.

'Perhaps,' he mused—'perhaps I have been too easy, too merciful; but, after all, I could not be certain, and dared not make a mistake. If he has it, he must have picked it up just before he came upon me in the drawing-room. Now he will restore it and go away. It is a strange business—a very unpleasant business; but I have done my best to put it right.'

He felt so satisfied with his efforts that he heard with great composure, a little later on, that the lost jewel had not yet been found. This intelligence was brought by Sir Edward himself, who entered the library looking much upset.

'Every possible and probable spot has been searched over and over again,' he said. 'I am afraid that this is not a mere case of accident.'

'Indeed?' said the Bishop gravely.

'No. A stone of that size cannot lie long unnoticed. Its very brilliancy would be against that. I am afraid'—

'You are afraid?'

'That this is a very serious matter,' said Sir Edward in a lower tone—'a very serious matter. The diamond was dropped in the drawing-room just before we went upstairs to dress for dinner. It must have been picked up after we had gone and before you came down.'

'My own conclusion,' thought the Bishop; and he nodded with increased gravity.

'Then,' continued his host slowly, with the air of one who knows the importance of his de-

cisions—'then the field of inquiry is limited. I quite appreciate the injury which might be caused by a false accusation; but—but I must act at once. Some of my servants are new and untried.'

'Hem!' said the Bishop. 'I understand—I fully understand.'

'But I must not go into this business myself,' added Sir Edward. 'It shall be given into skilled hands. There is a man on the detective staff at Hazleton who has done well in matters of this kind, and I could have him here by to-morrow. What is your opinion?'

The Bishop gave it his earnest consideration. He felt sure that by to-morrow the stone would be restored and the affair happily concluded; but he could not say so. It would satisfy the somewhat restless and excitable baronet if he were allowed to have his own way.

'There is no harm in it,' he decided aloud. 'Yes, on the whole, I think your course is a wise one. It is such a delicate matter—in your own household.'

Sir Edward moved to the writing-table. 'That is exactly the point,' he said. 'I feel so helpless, and this man will know exactly what to do. I will write at once.'

He rang for lights, and then wrote a hurried letter. In five minutes it was finished, sealed, and addressed, and given into the hands of a groom, with strict orders that it should be posted immediately.

'Now I feel more easy,' declared the master of the house. 'He will be here by Sunday evening at latest; and in the meantime we must keep our eyes open. Let us go into the drawing-room.'

The Bishop went, feeling pleasantly conscious that he had laid the train for a satisfactory sequel to this disturbing incident. His very merciful treatment of Martin, too, was an agreeable memory; and he joined the party in the drawing-room with a smiling and benign countenance. The restraint which had naturally fallen upon every one only served to emphasise his good spirits. He told his best stories in his very best manner, and his laugh was as free and hearty as that of Commander Digby himself.

When the hour came for retiring he passed up the great staircase with a light heart. It was his rule to retire early on a Saturday, and he had promised to conduct the service in the village church next morning. He would spend a pleasant, restful night, and would awake in good time to enjoy the first freshness of a summer Sabbath.

His room was on the first landing; but just as he reached the door he was surprised to hear a patter-patter of little feet in the corridor above. A moment later a small figure in white ran to the stair-rail, and an eager face, crowned with a tangle of short curls, looked over at him.

'Wobber!' cried a childish voice in a loud whisper; 'wobber!'

The Bishop gazed at the apparition in astonishment. There was mischief in that little face; but he thought there was also a certain amount of awe and admiration. While he wondered two hands seized the white-robed figure from behind, and he caught a glimpse of another face, flushed with annoyance.

'Oh, Miss Connie, for shame!' cried the nurse. 'Come back to bed at once.'

'It's the wobber,' protested Miss Connie, struggling in vain. 'I want to see the wobber.' And then the figures vanished together, amid subdued exclamations of entreaty and rebuke.

The Bishop entered his room and locked the door. 'The ways of children,' he said to himself, 'are very amusing—very amusing indeed. I wonder what she was thinking of.'

He had almost entirely forgotten his previous conversation with Miss Connie, and her words had no clear meaning for him. Like many others among our learned, he was rather absent-minded, and his memory was not to be trusted. He dismissed the matter with a smile, and prepared to disrobe himself in pleasant expectation of quiet slumber.

During this process he became aware that there was something small and hard in one of his vest-pockets. With some curiosity he took it between his finger and thumb and brought it to the light.

For a few moments he gazed at the object in simple wonder, turning it over and over. Then he laid it on the mantelshelf, and gazed at it again. The wonder in his face changed to a look of consternation.

The article before him was small, indeed, but its size had nothing to do with the matter. It glittered brightly in the rays of the gas-jet—glittered with a purity and brilliancy which even a child could not mistake. He took it up again, and turned it over once more. 'This,' he muttered, in a tone of sudden conviction—'this is Lady Stalland's diamond!'

Some convictions come as inspirations. This one followed from no train of thought, no mental process; but the mind was immediately satisfied with it. Afterwards came an illuminating flash of memory which seemed to make everything clear.

There were Sir Edward's words in the library—that the very brilliancy of the stone must have prevented it from lying long unnoticed. It was quite true—its glitter had attracted his own eye, and he had picked it up as one of the child's toys. If it had been one of her playthings she would have missed it at once.

And during all the searching and commotion the gem had been lying securely in an episcopal pocket. How ridiculous—how absurd! But at all events it was found now, and could be re-

stored in a moment. The Bishop began to put on again the garments he had removed, so that he might run downstairs. But before he had completed this work his face clouded over with dismay. He stopped to think.

In explanation of his further conduct it is only fair to remark here that our Bishop was extremely, nervously sensitive. Criticism of his public work had caused him many sleepless nights, and the slightest breath of blame had the power to give him pain. He suddenly called to mind what had passed during the evening, and saw that he stood in a peculiarly unfortunate position.

At the dinner-table he had expressly denied having seen the diamond. He had looked on at the general distress with sympathetic eyes; he had conversed with his host on the matter, and had even advised him to send for the police. Would any one believe—could he expect any one to believe—that he had been in possession of the missing article all the while without knowing it? Preposterous!

He might explain that he had forgotten—forgotten that he had found a ten-thousand-pound diamond ten minutes before! He might declare that he had mistaken it for a piece of glass, and they would smile. Who could mistake a stone of that lustre and beauty for anything else? People were so prone to think evil—even of bishops! They would glance at each other in a meaning way; they would rake up remembered cases of sudden temptation and quick repentance—the smirch of suspicion would remain upon his name for ever. A dampness broke out upon his brow, and he stared at that wretched diamond in growing horror.

There came a sound of footsteps and voices in the corridor. He started and listened guiltily,

with a vague thought of police. Then he knew that the voices were those of his fellow-guests, retiring for the night.

He pulled himself together. In a few minutes his host would come upstairs also. He would wait until he reached the corridor, and then call him in. Sir Edward would understand, and the matter would go no further. He went hastily to the door and waited, listening, with his hand upon the key.

The time went slowly, but at last he heard voices once more. Sir Edward was coming upstairs now, probably with Lady Stalland. In two minutes all would be right again.

But then another dreadful question occurred to him. Would it all be right? Sir Edward was of a suspicious, hasty temperament. Only the Bishop knew that a detective had been sent for, and the master of the house would not fail to recall the fact. It might appear even more curious to him than to any one else. He might think that his talk of police had frightened the culprit into a surrender of his spoil. He might think—Good heavens! he might think almost anything, and with excellent reason, too.

So the Bishop reflected in an agony of doubt and indecision. All his moral strength, his courage, his stability, seemed to have deserted him. He heard Sir Edward's footsteps approach—they reached his door—they were passing. His fingers trembled upon the key but did not turn it. It was too late!

The footsteps died away; a door was opened and closed at the end of the corridor. That sound came with a shock; it told him that he had failed—that he had fallen. The chance had gone.

'And I,' he groaned—'I am a villain! I—I have stolen the diamond!'

## SOME CENTRAL AMERICAN INDIANS.



THE descendants of that mysterious race who occupied Mexico before the coming of the Aztecs (and who afterwards migrated into Yucatan and Central America, where traces of their civilisation are still to be seen in the form of temples, monoliths, and mounds) are still to be found along the valley of the Laconton River and in the central and southern portions of the peninsula of Yucatan. The Laconton Indians are probably in much the same condition as they were at the time of the conquest; they still sacrifice to their ancient gods, and iron has not as yet superseded flint in the manufacture of their weapons and implements. The eastern coast of Yucatan, though nominally Mexican territory, is occupied by a tribe of Indians known as the Santa Cruz, who many years ago threw off their allegiance to Mexico

after massacring every Spaniard in their country upon whom they could lay hands. These Indians are savage and warlike, and do not allow any stranger to enter their country unless he has got special permission from the chief, and is conducted during his stay there by one of themselves.

They take great trouble in concealing their villages in the bush, even cutting out the tongues of their cocks to prevent enemies being guided to the village by the noise of their crowing. In travelling along the main tracks through the bush one will come across only a cluster of two or three huts at long intervals, and probably pass without noticing the narrow tracks which, if followed, lead to villages buried in the dense bush. The houses are constructed of upright beams, forked at the ends, on which are laid cross-pieces; the walls are built of pimento stems placed close together, and sometimes plastered over



with mud; the roof is thatched with palm-leaves, and the whole structure is bound together with *ti-ti*, a long, tough creeper which is very plentiful in the bush, and entirely supplies the place of rope and nails with the Indians.

Physically the Santa Cruz are rather a fine race, some of the women being really pretty, even according to European standards. The hair is long, black, and straight, the complexion light brown, the limbs muscular and well proportioned, and the extremities small and delicate.

The Indian's property consists of his hammock, a few calabashes and earthen pots, his machete (a heavy sword-like knife, which he uses indiscriminately for fighting, bush-clearing, and agricultural work), and a cotton suit. All these he can carry in his *macapal* (a netted bag slung over the back and attached to the forehead); and with his wife, and dogs trotting behind, he frequently moves from place to place, as a new house can be put up in the course of a few days, and every man is his own architect and builder. It is, in fact, quite common for whole villages to move in this way when they have exhausted all the neighbouring corn-growing lands, as the same piece of land will only produce one good crop of maize without manuring.

Their religion is a curious grafting of Christianity on to their ancient faith. They will on no account excavate in the numerous ancient mounds which abound in the country, and firmly believe that they see the small idols which are found in these walking about in the bush at night.

They will put their arms round the neck of a corpse, and whisper messages to it to be conveyed to their friends in the other world. If a chief is very ill, *pavos del monte*, or wild turkeys, are sacrificed, and the blood made into small cakes, which are partaken of by the whole village. In their principal village is a large cross, left by the Mexicans when they were massacred, and this they worship as a god, believing that it has the power of speech, and approaching it only with bare feet.

Their medical knowledge is very primitive, though they put up a simple fracture of one of the long bones very neatly, using a padding of cotton-wool all round the limb after bringing the fragments together; and over this are placed a number of small, round, straight sticks, the whole being bound round with blue-gum fibres. Bleeding they perform with a piece of sharpened bone, usually opening the temporal vein. This is a very common operation amongst them, nearly every one undergoing it at some time in his life. A very favourite remedy is a decoction made from the charred remains of animals, different animals being used for different diseases. A large kind of rat was in great request for whooping-cough. When suffering from malaria they will lie in their hammocks with a small fire under-

neath; or, lighting a fire on the earthen floor till it is very hot, they will lie on this, and after getting thoroughly heated, take a plunge into cold water.

The children are very much given to clay eating, which makes them pot-bellied and anemic. I asked a little girl of eight or nine years how much clay she ate in a day, and she scraped about a couple of ounces from the mud-plastered side of the house as her daily allowance.

The women do by far the greater part of the work; they rise at three in the morning to grind the daily allowance of corn for the family. This is done on a large, flat rubbing-stone. A round stone rubber like a rolling-pin is used. The corn is placed on the flat stone, and the woman, standing behind, rolls it between the two stones, adding water from time to time till it is changed to a dough-like mass; pieces are taken from this as required, and made into flat, round cakes, which are baked on an earthen plate over the fire. These cakes are soapy in taste and very gritty, as a large part of the stone is ground off into the corn every time it is used. The maize, the evening before it is required for grinding, is put into a large earthen pot, with lime, and allowed to boil all night over the fire, to remove the outer husk and soften the grain. The women wear a single loose garment of cotton, woven by themselves, but square at the neck and without sleeves; sometimes they embroider coloured devices into these round the neck and over the breast. Both men and women wear sandals made from the hide of the danta or tapir.

The tribe is governed by a chief whose power is absolute; and they are very jealous of any outside interference, especially from the Spaniards. On one occasion the Mexican government attempted to cut a road through the bush from Peto to the Santa Cruz capital; five of the Indians went to see the work, and were well treated and had presents made to them by the Mexicans, but on returning to their village they were at once executed as traitors by order of the chief.

The usual mode of execution is curious. When the chief decides that a man has merited death he is not informed of his sentence, nor does he undergo any sort of trial, but some of the chiefs' soldiers are despatched to his house, who, taking him unawares, slaughter him at once by chopping him with their machetes.

A few years ago one of the under chiefs had come down to visit the village of Corofal, in British Honduras, and whilst there had bought a bottle of laudanum for the cure of toothache. When he returned to his village he was met by three messengers from the chief, Roman Pec, who informed him that he was at once to return with them, as the chief required him. Being well aware that this was equivalent to his death-sentence, he asked the soldiers' permission to retire for

a few moments to prepare for the journey. After some hesitation they gave him permission, when he went at once to his *macapal*, took out the bottle of laudanum, and swallowed the whole, and then started with the soldiers. Before they had gone very far the opium began to take effect, and notwithstanding the efforts of the soldiers to get him along by pricking him with their machetes, he was dead before they reached the chief.

Men and women alike are very fond of rum, and I have seen a pretty little Indian girl of seventeen or eighteen, who had come into the

nearest English settlement, go straight off to the liquor store and purchase half-a-pint of overproof white rum; this she drank down in three or four gulps, and in a few minutes lay down in the *plaza* in a semi-comatose condition to sleep off the effects. The men when intoxicated get savage and quarrelsome, and any European who finds himself in a village when a demijohn of rum has been brought in had better retire as quickly as possible, for, no matter how friendly they may have been before, they are almost certain to attack him as soon as the rum begins to take effect.

## THE LEARNING OF THE UNLEARNED.



HAVE little or no hope of making the reader who glances leisurely over these lines some six months hence—always supposing that the kindness of a discriminating editor permits the eyes of any reader to fall upon them—I have, I repeat, little hope of making the possible reader comprehend, much less sympathise with, my present trials and difficulties in what seems at first sight a very simple matter—nothing more, in short, than the placing of a broody hen on the sitting of eggs by which my modest poultry-yard is annually replenished.

The possible reader who pursues me farther than the above unwieldy paragraph—so palpably 'pointless'—will doubtless suggest that, in default of practical knowledge, I should follow the excellent advice laid down by such masters of poultry lore and poultry literature as Messrs—. Some half-dozen names occur to me here, and to select would be invidious. Alas! to their excellent manuals have I in this emergency applied in vain. I have gleaned much useful information from them on many points: on the choice of a desirable 'general purposes' fowl; on the treatment of sitting hens; on the rearing of chickens through all their little life from the shell to the pot. But on two important points are my instructors silent. They do not tell me how to induce my old and valued sitting hen to 'go broody' at the time when I require her services in this particular; nor how to ensure that the hens whose virtues I wish to perpetuate shall not cease laying just at the time when *their* services are required to produce the requisite 'sitting' of eggs. *Hinc illæ lacrimæ.*

This is not precisely the strain in which this paper was intended to commence; 'but 'twill serve.' I hesitate to neglect the inspiration that is born of passing events. Nor is this complaint of the contrariety of my feathered charges by any means as foreign to my title and matter as may at first sight be judged. Hazlitt exposed in a

brilliant essay the 'Ignorance of the Learned,' acting perhaps rather the part of Saul among the prophets; so I—whether of the learned or of the ignorant it boots not to inquire—would raise my voice in the cause of the too often unchampioned ignorant. For a learning they have, though not of books. I warrant me some old village dame, whose reading begins and ends with the large letters of advertising posters, and whose penmanship is her 'mark,' would in my case have her laying hens and her broody hen ready to hand when wanted; while I—

'They think they know that things are so-and-so because they have read it in books; now I know how they are by actual experience,' said to me an octogenarian fresh from a dispute with his college-bred son and daughter. The old gentleman was himself by no means devoid of erudition; but he preferred to bring into the field against the too self-assertive youngsters the wisdom of life rather than the lore of letters. He probably saw, what is indeed all too visible, the tendency, ever increasing, to believe that all knowledge worth attainment can be sooner or later acquired from books; that for the educated there is a 'royal road' to that learning which the so-called ignorant attain by slow labour and attention; that they can, in short, learn facts through the medium of words, and never soil their fingers by actual contact with things.

This idea is instilled into many of us all too early. We receive as gifts the *Amateur Mechanic* and similar instructors; and we pore over the knowledge therein contained very much at our ease, and learn—in theory—many useful arts. And it is not until we are launched on the sea of practice that we find ourselves driven after all to consult the genuine craftsman in person—the carpenter or blacksmith, who *shows* us—he is not over good at talking—just those little points and details which go to make the successful whole. Lucky for us if we take the lesson to heart then and there, and are convinced that we cannot go comfortably through life upon theories, but require

a firm foundation on the solid bed-rock of experience. It is a day of handbooks and handbook knowledge; and handbooks are dangerous things. One is quite sure that the new boy described in *Vice Versa*, who, while his fellows played football with more or less vigour, walked about the field diligently studying the 'Laws and Regulations of the Game of Football,' would never be of any use in a 'scrum' or run a clever 'touch-down'!

Childish fancies and imaginations are not always to be blushing put aside by the full-grown worldling; chance may throw a gold coin into an infant's mud-pie. Few children of average reading but have heard of a shipwreck, a lonely island, and the subsequent fascinating experiences of the castaways; and few of any imagination but have wished themselves of the party and have pictured their own doings with never-ending delight. It possibly never strikes them, but it may with advantage strike us, how great a revolution might be worked in a little community by a realisation of this oft-told tale. Let us suppose, then, the shipwreck and the island, and a party of ten survivors: a bishop, a Q.C., a university don, a doctor, and a reporter—all learned men, you see, comparatively speaking, and their theoretical knowledge comprising a vast amount of ancient and modern lore; and the other five a carpenter, two agricultural labourers—'general workmen' they would be called in some parts of the country—a 'navvy,' and a railway porter.

I need not enlarge upon the result; the reader sees the point without my dwelling on it further. In this revolution of existence, when each one of these castaways would have to begin life again under conditions so different to those in which they had grown up, with what a very different gauge positions in life and values of rank would require to be judged! I do not say that there, among themselves, there would be any such immediate reversal of judgment, or that those five members of the 'working classes' would say at once to their fellow-unfortunates, 'You perceive, of course, that *we* are now the members of the community on whom the comfort and safety of all depend; please, therefore, in future, treat us accordingly, respect us accordingly, and address us accordingly;' though we may incline to hope that those five cultivated and refined men would see the justice of such a request before it was made, and would feel and act in accordance with it. The demand would, I repeat, in all likelihood never be made; for there is an innate modesty in the working man, however agitators may have done their best to drive it out of him, which leads him to believe in the theory of his 'betters.'

For, indeed, those five first-mentioned men, each no doubt with a college education at his back, would probably cut but poor figures in the everyday circumstances of the life they would be so

suddenly required to lead. The doctor would perhaps feel most at his ease; there might be wounds and bruises sustained in getting ashore; there would always be the possibility of illness; he is one whom no member of the little party could ever feel to be *de trop*. Besides, a doctor has 'fingers,' in the sense in which a good driver is said to have 'hands;' the man who can guide a lancet and dress a wound might be depended on for other handiwork. The bishop too: we would hope that he would be welcome; that he would know how to make himself welcome and honoured even though his hand should be soft and his arm unused to that daily labour which would in all likelihood be so needful to life and comfort.

But for the don and the lawyer. Of what use would be their long-sought and hard-earned knowledge; the scholar's dead languages and the Q.C.'s wide legal experience—his cases and judgments and precedents? And that member of the fourth estate—the reporter—he who is supposed to know something of everything—by hearsay. Alas for him now! Better to have handled a spade than to have penned exhaustive agricultural articles. He has inspected many a factory and workshop. Can he make shift to sharpen an edged tool or to drive a rusty nail through leather? For these will be useful accomplishments.

This one-sidedness of knowledge and attainments is doubtless for many of us a necessary evil; but a crying evil it is, and one to be diligently avoided where possible. The more a man excels in head-knowledge, in the erudition of words, so much the more should he strive to preserve his equilibrium by a balance of solid mechanical skill. Let him pass at regular intervals to the carpenter's bench or to the forge; better still to the open air and the care of plants or animals, be it only to pottering with a few square yards of flower-border or a pair of bantams.

Plants and animals are better still I say, because, while the occupations of the workshop can be adjusted by rule and square, Nature has eccentricities of her own which the amateur will have to discover as he proceeds. Roughly speaking, books may perhaps be said to give us rules; Nature provides the exceptions. Take as an instance in point the poultry-yard; the reader, bearing in mind my present anxieties, will be lenient if I return still to this topic. Your 'manual' gives elaborate instructions as to the proper kind of roosting-perch and the best kind of nest, and cautions you about the exclusion of draughts from the fowl-house. Then comes experience and shows you that *your* hens happen to prefer a roost in the apple-tree, and, scouting your dearly bought or laboriously constructed nest-boxes, choose a broken hamper wherein to place their eggs.

Carlyle, his wholesome Scotch soul abhorrent

of dirt, took bass-broom and bucket from the weakly servant, and swilled and brushed the 'area' of the Cheyne Row home till he was satisfied with its appearance; and no one will doubt that not only the large-heartedness that prompted the action, but also the ability to turn his hand successfully to such a 'matter of the house,' was a part of his character for which he and the world were alike the better.

There are too many of us who have never taken hold of life save with gloved hands. We are too ignorant of the real *feel* of things—the naked touch. We expect to find a handle by which to grasp our daily tasks, and we are woefully nonplussed when it is absent. The unlettered man, the man of the masses, on the contrary, is more used to taking things as they are and making the best of them. As a consequence he has expedients and ways and means ready for sudden emergencies.

There is such a vast amount of important knowledge in this world which it seems utterly impossible, for no very apparent reason, to reduce to black and white. Take the art of cooking for an example. I have heard of some few good cookery-books; never of a really perfect and reliable one. All my friends to whom I have applied for statistics on the subject decline to place implicit trust in any of them. The flow of information seems apt to fail at critical junctures; the specification of quantities lapses into vagueness; the writer veils his—or her—meaning in such terms as 'a little,' 'sufficient,' and the like. So that it seems that, however one's culinary education may be 'finished' by means of these well-intentioned manuals, there is necessary a previous 'grounding' by experience and oral tradition.

Who has not admired the 'magic fingers' of the working classes?—the deft housemaid, who lays and lights in a few minutes the obstinate fire with which we have struggled for an hour and more; the little stable-lad who 'bits' in a twinkling the restive horse that has awed us with laid-back ears and fidgety heels. These are moments when the average man who is ignorant of all kinds of manual dexterity, whose livelihood lies in his pen or his tongue, feels himself—or should feel himself—humbled to the ground.

William Godwin is said to have divided men into two classes: those who had written a book and those who had not. Without going so far as to accept this distinction with a reversed estimate of his divisions, it does appear that better standards might be found. Perhaps already the high-water mark of public opinion as to the all-powerfulness of mere book-learning has been reached. There are not wanting army reformers who suggest that something more is required for the young officer than the ability to pass a difficult examination. The pendulum has

swung perhaps to an opposite extreme as to the proper place of games in school life; but no doubt an ultimate mean will be found. Hazlitt's dictum that any one who, having passed the prescribed course of a classical education without being made a fool thereby, should congratulate himself on a narrow escape, may be an unpleasant way of placing more than a grain of truth before the learned world.

## CHRISTMAS MEMORIES:

### THE DAYS OF LONG AGO.

BESIDE the Christmas fire  
There passeth, as in dream,  
All sight and sound that touched us,  
All shadows on Life's stream  
That rusheth now so swiftly  
To the tideless ocean's flow.  
Oh! the music of its ripple  
In the days of long ago!

Beside the Christmas fire  
Again we see the light  
Of the old dear home, so distant,  
And yet so near to-night.  
And we were once those children  
Who shouted in the snow,  
And fed the robin-redbreasts  
In the days of long ago.

Beside the Christmas fire  
The shadows still pass on,  
And childhood's happy valley  
And careless heart are gone.  
But oh! the hopes that beckon,  
The beacon-lights that glow—  
Swift foot and heart undaunted  
In the days of long ago.

Beside the Christmas fire  
We see the path divide;  
One step—and no returning  
For swelling of the tide.  
One tryst—the great Hereafter—  
That meeting-place must know,  
All lightly as we missed it  
In the days of long ago.

Beside the Christmas fire  
If sometimes Life may seem  
The shadow of a shadow  
And a dream within a dream;  
Hark to the Christmas anthem  
Which comes across the snow!  
It links fair life and endless  
With the days of long ago.

MARY GORGES.